



Public Sector Reports

Michigan ROUNDUP

Legislative Week in Review

- A new **abortion consent bill** will be introduced soon by pro-choice legislators who have formed the Committee for Strong Families. The bill would require pregnant teens to get permission for an abortion from a family member (grandparent, sister, brother, aunt or uncle over age 25), a counselor (psychologist, psychiatrist, registered nurse, social worker, or licensed counselor), or a juvenile court judge. Governor Blanchard has indicated in the past that he could support such a bill. Hearings on the proposal will be held in the Detroit area, Grand Rapids, and Traverse City. The antiabortion Committee for Parents' Rights initiative petition would require teens to obtain permission from a parent, guardian, or juvenile court judge.
- House Speaker Lewis Dodak (D-Birch Run) has asked the House Oversight Committee to develop recommendations to prohibit speaking fees for all elected and appointed public officials and to review the system under which House members are reimbursed for expenses.
- The 18-member Ad Hoc Committee on Criminal Justice, supported by House Speaker Lewis Dodak, hopes to release its report this week, according to the Associated Press. It is expected to recommend several changes to the criminal justice system, such as instituting a shock sentencing program, developing alternatives to prison for drunk driving offenses, allowing police to wiretap and enter unannounced the homes of suspected drug dealers, increasing the number of state boot camps for violent offenders, and instituting gubernatorial rather than commission appointment of the Department of Corrections director.
- The **community college budget** was reported out of the Senate Appropriations Committee on Wednesday for consideration by the full chamber. Highlights include narrowing the range of base budget increases to 3.5–7.5 percent (the executive budget recommended range was 2–9 percent) and phasing out the Wayne County Community College tax credit, beginning in FY 1992.
- Physicians no longer would be able to charge more than the Medicare reimbursement rate under legislation approved along straight party lines by the House Judiciary Committee. About 250 seniors attended the committee meeting.
- The Senate passed unanimously the \$1.3 billion 1990–91 **mental health** appropriation on Thursday and sent it to the House, where it has been referred to the Appropriations Committee.

Political News

- About 1,200 health care workers rallied at the Capitol Wednesday to protest cuts in **hospital funding**. Michigan Hospital Association President Spencer Johnson told the group that 23 hospitals in the state have closed over the past decade. More closings are expected this year due to legislative cuts in health care budgets, he said. The groups included representatives of 200 Michigan hospitals.
- Williamston resident and legislative aide Tom Greene plans to run for the Oakland County **51st District** seat currently held by Rep. Mat J. Dunaskiss (R-Lake Orion). Greene, a Republican and former television political reporter, will try for the seat Dunaskiss is vacating in a bid for the state Senate.
- Debate over whether the **Accident Fund** should be a state agency or a private entity heated up again this week at hearings in the Senate Human Resources and Senior Citizens Committee. The Accident Fund, which serves 35,000 businesses and pays out workers' compensation to 10,000 claimants, has been slated to become a state agency; its 470 employees would convert to the state civil service system. Failure to complete that conversion nearly cost the employees their paychecks last week. The Michigan Court of Appeals granted a temporary stay, permitting the issuance of payroll checks and delaying a circuit court ruling that barred any payments until the Accident Fund becomes operational as a state agency.
- Negotiations between Senate Majority Leader John Engler and House Speaker Lewis Dodak on the reinstatement of the **Detroit utility tax** broke off this week. A compromise package which sought Senate backing for inheritance tax cuts in exchange for House support of the utility tax, thus permitting Detroit to avoid police layoffs and other financial problems, has foundered.
- From 1983–88, U.S. Senator Donald Riegle received \$344,000 from **political action committees (PACs)** aligned with financial institutions, according to a report released this week by Common Cause. Riegle's role as chair of the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee has been under sharp scrutiny in recent months. Common Cause also reported that pro-Israel groups were top PAC contributors to U.S. Sen. Carl Levin during the same period, donating \$178,000. Common Cause complains that PACs give special interest groups inordinate influence in the legislative process.